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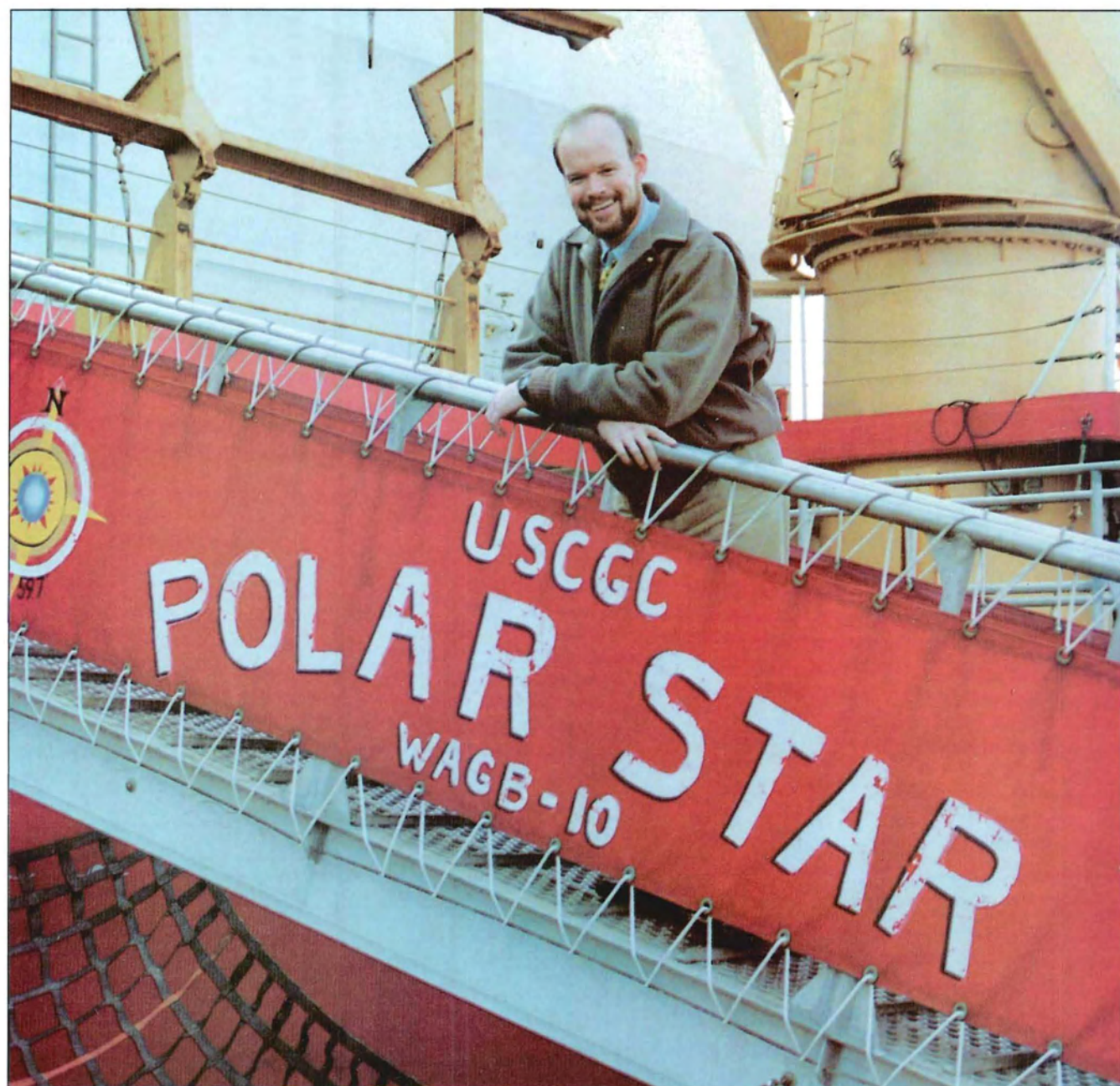
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# OUT OF UNIFORM

CIVILIANS IN THE U.S. COAST GUARD



# 1994

## CIVILIAN SUPPORT FILLS VITAL COAST GUARD LINK

**Y**esterday, today and tomorrow the civilian work force has been, is, and will be a consistent and vital part of the Coast Guard organization.

Civilians often work behind scenes, away from the spotlight, but their presence can be felt on the cutters, smallboats and aircraft. Without them the cutters wouldn't sail, the aircraft wouldn't fly and the stations would fall into disrepair.

They are also an extraordinarily important and fascinating part of Coast Guard history. Lifesaving missions, inspection functions, and aids-to-navigation duties all were at one time done by civilians. Many of the legendary figures in Coast Guard history were not military but civilian.

This publication may serve to introduce many of our active-duty members to the role civilians play in their lives. It may also introduce many of our civilian members to their rich place in Coast Guard history.

— RADM James M. Loy, G-P

### *A look inside*

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*Out of Uniform: Civilians in the U.S. Coast Guard* is a publication of the Office of Personnel and Training, Civilian Personnel Division, and a *Commandant's Bulletin* insert for April 1994. For information about the Coast Guard, visit your local library or write to the Coast Guard Historian's office at: Commandant (G-CP-4), 2100 2nd St., S.W., Washington, DC 20593. Historical overview by Dr. John Tilley. Other text by Gerard Co. and the civilian personnel division. Editing, design and layout by PA3 Petey Milnes. Photos courtesy of the Coast Guard Historian's office and Gerard Co.

**Front Cover:** Civilians today are a vital component of the Coast Guard's total work force. Positions they fill vary from secretaries and engineers to mechanics and contracting specialists.

**Back Cover:** Ida Zorada Lewis, a lighthouse keeper at Lime Rock in Newport, R.I., rescued many people during the late 1800s. In 1857, Hosea Lewis, her father, was appointed the first keeper of Lime Light Rock. Four months later, CAPT Lewis was immobilized by a stroke. Since the Lighthouse Board had no pension system, the family had no choice but to stay at the lighthouse and keep the light burning so they could continue drawing his salary. The task of operating the light fell to Lewis's 15-year-old daughter, Ida.





## Civilians today



*Elaine Martin (left) and Theodore W. Bridis, both from Civil Engineering Unit Miami, have been tackling design problems and making sure resources are readily available since they began working as civilian employees for the Coast Guard.*



**Right:** Sandra Borden, of Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, is currently deputy trail boss for the Vessel Traffic Services 2000 project. The project should help facilitate the safe and efficient transit of vessels in America's major ports and waterways.

There are some 8,000 civilian members of the Coast Guard — 2,000 of whom are paid with non-appropriated funds — located in 100 different geographical locations and representing more than 280 different occupations. Their contributions are essential in supporting the Coast Guard mission.

It is hoped that through the eyes and voices of various civilian members, a sense of the significant contributions and importance of all those serving "out of uniform" will be gained.

At Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, Sandra Borden is involved with the total revamping of how America handles ship traffic in its major ports. Labeled Vessel Traffic Service 2000, the system being developed in major ports and inland waterways is designed to facilitate the safe and efficient transit of vessels in order to prevent collisions and groundings.

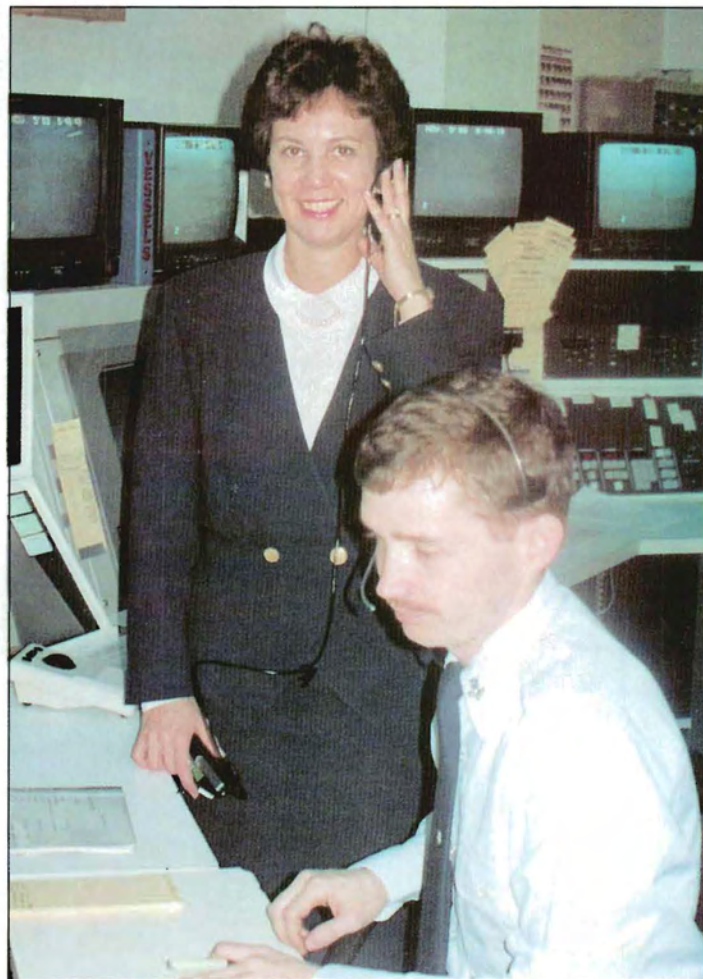
"When you're about to revamp the way traffic is handled in 17 ports across the country, you get a lot of people's attention real fast," Borden said. "Everyone needs to make sure that their interests are not being overlooked. And we spent a lot of time with all of them to ensure their concerns were addressed."

It is the variety in her work that helps keep her enthusiasm level high; that and the blend of personalities she deals with ranging from her supervisor, CAPT Chris Kreiler, to the myriad of contractors and consultants.

"I'm very fortunate," she said. "The captain and I work as partners. We work toward accomplishing a mammoth task. We must oversee lots of people who don't directly report to us. These include contractors, systems engineers and a whole bunch of people who have very unique abilities."

Some 40 miles north of where Borden is overseeing complex computer systems, Warren Crough is busy doing what he does best — building cutters at the Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay, Md. He's good at it, partly because he's had 35 years to practice his skill — and partly because he was born with an ability to make things with his hands. He began in 1958 as a shipfitter apprentice. Today he is a ship-fitter foreman.

"I've seen a lot of ships begin with a de-



sign on paper and wind up taking to the seas," he said. "There's a good feeling to that. There's nothing quite like it."

One of Crough's proudest accomplishments is the work he and his colleagues did on repairing major damage done to the Coast Guard training cutter *Eagle*.

A collision caved in the bowsprit of the 309-foot, three-masted cutter. It was an ugly assault on one of the world's most beautiful tall ships.

"Whenever I see pictures of her under sail, I look at that bowsprit and I can say to myself 'I made that,'" he said. "Not too many people have the chance to take pride in something like that."

It would take the *Eagle* three days to sail from Curtis Bay to Frank Shubert's pride and joy — the Coney Island Lighthouse in New York. It stands as a warm, blinking glow to mariners, helping them guide ships and boats into the New York harbor area.

Shubert has been manning the lighthouse for 33 years. At age 78, he is the last of the Coast Guard's lighthouse keepers and one of the service's most venerated symbols. Step one foot onto the grounds and evidence of his diligent stewardship envelopes



you like his firm and friendly handshake.

Shubert asked for the Coney Island assignment in 1960 because it allowed him to live with his family in the keeper's house next to the lighthouse. Indeed, tending the lighthouse became a family affair for Shubert, his wife, and their three children. He recalls fondly the afternoons that shivering young boaters sat in his kitchen after their vessels sank during sudden squalls on the harbor. His wife wrapped them in blankets and brewed hot chocolate, while his children scurried about with excitement.

Keeping a lookout over New York Harbor, Shubert has seen a lot during his time at Coney Island Lighthouse. He bills it as one of, or possibly the best job in the world.

Down river, Nick Mpras looks at maritime traffic from a different perspective. He deals with problems that naturally come with bridge administration. There are conflicting needs between land transportation and marine transportation, and between environmental organizations and developers.

Bridges, while they aid land traffic, are an obstruction to marine traffic. And bridges constructed to support new development bring with them a host of sensitive environmental and economic issues for the local area.

Mpras, a program manager at headquarters for bridge administration, and his staff

of 16 civilians focus on the big picture.

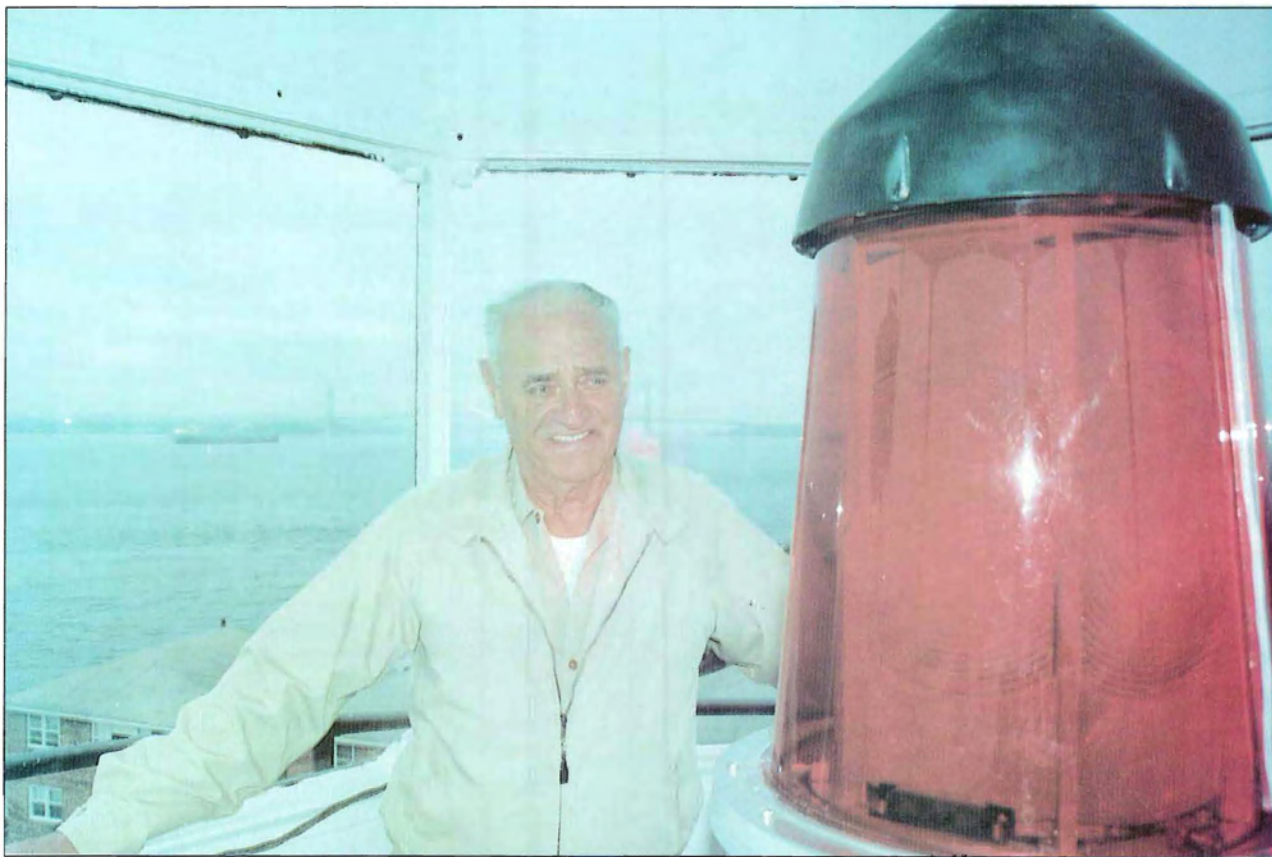
"Most people know about taking care of bridges and may even have an idea of the balance between meeting the needs of marine and road traffic," said Mpras. "But few think about what's involved in the decision to build a bridge."

A bridge can change the synergy of an area forever. With many of the nation's bridges built shortly after the turn of the century, it's a constant challenge to be able to keep large, modern, vessel traffic moving up the nation's waterways.

Between the potential for new bridges and the need to upgrade and modernize existing ones, Charlene Hudson, who works for Mpras, has her work cut out for her. She worked in the 2nd District as an information specialist. Now she's an environmental-protection specialist at headquarters, dealing with federal, state, and local regulations in approving bridge permits and assessing environmental impact.

Along with Mpras and Hudson, Kirti Pancholi's job involves bridge administration.

Joining the civilian arm of the Coast Guard in 1991, Pancholi has been serving as project engineer in charge of design and construction of the Norfolk Southern Railroad Bridge in Hannibal, Mo., as well as the Florida Avenue Railroad/Highway Bridge in



**Left:** Frank Shubert, keeper of the Coney Island Lighthouse in New York City, has helped guide ships, tankers and boats into the New York harbor area for the past 33 years.





**Above:** Kirti K. Pancholi is currently in charge of design and construction of the Southern Railroad Bridge in Hannibal, Mo. Born in Billmore, India, he joined the civilian branch of the Coast Guard in 1991.

New Orleans, La. Comparing his current job with others he has held, Pancholi said, "I have worked internationally and find this a very good place to be. I enjoy the people, and I enjoy seeing bridges go from design to reality."

There are "designers" of a different sort just down the hall at headquarters. They are seated around a conference table in a boardroom setting. There's only one uniform. It is worn by RADM James M. Loy, chief of the Office of Personnel and Training at headquarters. He shares the conference table with the Coast Guard's top civilian executives — members of the Senior Executive Service.

They have much in common — flag officer rank and responsibility for translating national agenda, agency policy and Coast Guard missions into programs that serve the public. That is to say, they are paid to look at the big picture.

Their titles tell the story of the diversity

of activities for which the Coast Guard relies on their leadership and expertise. They include Joseph Angelo, associate program director for international activities, program oversight, and research and development; Thomas Fisher, chief of civilian personnel; Walter Somerville, chief of the Office of Civil Rights; Rue Helsel, deputy chief counsel; Martin Reubens, deputy chief of strategic planning staff; William Campbell, director of finance and procurement; Gerard Yoest, international affairs director and foreign policy advisor; Daniel Sheehan, director of the National Pollution Funds Center and Norm Lemley, director of the oil pollution prevention staff.

And the big picture involves more than what people traditionally think of as Coast Guard missions — national security, law enforcement, maritime safety and environmental protection.

The Coast Guard has a strong role representing the United States in the international arena as well.

"The Coast Guard heads U.S. delegations to organizations such as the International Maritime Organization, the International Association of Lighthouse Authorities and the International Lifeboat Conference," Yoest said. "Negotiations can be extremely difficult, as well as very political and high-level. For example, a recent delegation to the IMO assembly, headed by the commandant and comprised of military and civilian members, secured a resolution on alien smuggling which was used as a basis for further action at the U.N. in New York," he said.

Whether in a boardroom setting, developing strategic plans, or representing the Coast Guard at top-level conferences, members of the Senior Executive Service influence and shape not only the Coast Guard's future but play a leading role in the management of current policies and programs.

Neal Thayer works about as far away from a boardroom as you can get. As oceanographic liaison officer in Seattle, Wash., he is in charge of executing polar missions. His efforts center around the Coast Guard icebreakers *Polar Star* and *Polar Sea*. Thayer helps plan scientific expeditions by acting as a link between the scientific community and the Coast Guard.

He also oversees the return of equipment from recent missions; checks out cargo from numerous sources and fits it into up-



coming missions; monitors the retrieval of satellite weather images; communicates with scientists and the Coast Guard to keep each aware of mission progress; and serves as an all-around logistical wizard.

"The Coast Guard depends on me," he said. "I feel important here. I get lots of support from the organization. They know that my position requires specialization and continuity. Corporate knowledge is important. The Coast Guard knows all this. That's why they hire civilians."

On their journeys north, Thayer's ships slip past the coast where Frank Madison is busy taking care of one of this country's most spectacular environments.

A senior environmental specialist for Civil Engineering Unit Juneau, Alaska, Madison is known as the *toxic avenger*. He's a potent adversary for whatever poisons may endanger the pristine region.

While living in Washington state, he picked up a degree in education and engineering and headed to Alaska. In 1988, he accepted the job he now holds.

"Basically I investigate and clean up environmental problems around the state," said Madison. "The first thing they let me tackle was abandoned chemical drums and fuel-storage tanks left at various military bases. One of the toughest jobs, though, was on Kodiak Island. We found a mixture of 18 leaking fuel tanks and abandoned polychlorinated biphenyl

transformer poles. It was 70 degrees below zero. But in 40 days of extreme winter, we loaded 330,000 gallons of fuel and sent them to a treatment facility in Washington state."

His efforts have not gone unnoticed.

In 1991 he received an outstanding-performance award for his contributions to Coast Guard civil engineering. He is also the recipient of the 1990 Society of Military Engineers' John B. Oren Medal for his performance in dealing with hazardous substances.

Madison has had close and personal experiences with dangerous substances.

In October 1992, the abandoned lighthouse at Cape Decision, Alaska, caught fire. Nearby were storage tanks containing polychlorinated biphenyl. Should they ignite, deadly carcinogens would be released into the atmosphere. He and a colleague had to be lowered in baskets dangling from helicopters. Disaster was averted and the grizzly bear trailing the two men lost interest once the excitement died down.

Being pro-active is how Denise Burroughs handles problems in paradise.

As the 14th District's family-programs administrator in Honolulu, Burroughs helps members deal with the stresses of civilian and military life. Her daily calendar is a ledger in dealing with the harsher aspects of life: suicide prevention, financial counseling, divorce mediations and family violence.

She's noted for a unique ability to show



**Left:** Charlene Hudson works at headquarters as an environmental-protection specialist. She deals with regulations in approving bridge permits while assessing environmental impacts.



**Right:** Neal Thayer, an oceanographic liaison officer in Seattle, Wash., helps plan scientific expeditions aboard the Coast Guard's polar ice-breakers by acting as a link between the scientific community and the service.

people the reality of their situation and then gently but firmly help them deal with it.

Her family-advocacy program has been used as a prototype for other units to follow.

"If you're in the middle of a custody battle for your 5-year-old, or breaking up with your girlfriend, it can be tough to give what's demanded of you to the Coast Guard," she said. "By making you well, we make the Coast Guard well, happy and operable."

Maxine Lum, a secretary in the 14th District, may be one of the Coast Guard's most "decorated" civilians.

During her 34 years with the federal government, 27 of which have been with the Coast Guard, she has received 28 outstanding-performance ratings and 16 special-achievement awards. As secretary to the district commander, Lum continues to be highly recognized for her professionalism and personal initiative.

Like many secretaries, she provides both continuity and administrative support for her organization. She developed a secretarial handbook that greatly improved the quality of correspondence prepared throughout the district.

In addition to managing the office, Lum said, "I also enjoy seeing a project from start to finish. For instance it could be an admiral's reception. I like to plan it and to see it get off the ground."

Back on the mainland at the Aircraft Repair and Supply Center in Elizabeth City, N.C., getting things off the ground has a more literal meaning for Rodney Lawrence.

He is an aircraft sheet-metal-mechanic foreman in the Overhaul Branch at the Air-Rep & SupCen. He and his colleagues are charged with keeping the aircraft of the Coast Guard in the air. That means bringing special talents to unique problems in repairing aircraft.



"Coast Guard planes hang near the sea, that means corrosion problems," said Lawrence. "We can do it all here. Whatever it takes to keep them flying."

As Lawrence talks, the air around him vibrates from propellers and jet engines. Its a place where constant activity is the norm.

Like Lawrence, Mazline Turner is accustomed to the flurry of activity at the center. And getting the work done is Turner's primary focus. She is an aircraft-mechanics part-repairer leader working alongside Lawrence.

It may not have been very long ago that the world of aircraft mechanics belonged to men. But when Turner is in the shop, she's not just one of the guys, she is a shop leader. Turner is in charge of overhauling hydraulic components for various aircraft such as helicopters and Guardian jets.

"When I first got to this shop, people from the outside would come in and see me with



tools and do a double take," said Turner.

And being a shop leader drew even more attention.

"Everyone here is used to it now," she said. "They all know I'm out here doing good work, doing my job."

Turner notes that nowadays, there are more women working in these types of jobs.

"I feel very fortunate," she said. "I learned through on-the-job training and by going to many Coast Guard schools. The Coast Guard has been generous in allowing me to upgrade my skills."

Kathleen Woodall also took advantage of upgrading her skills and on-the-job training. She's the boss at the Coast Guard Exchange in Mayport, Fla., where she's been working as retail manager for the past 15 years.

As one of almost 2,000 of the Coast Guard's non-appropriated fund activity employees, she earns her keep in more ways than one since the monies for her position, and for the very operation of the store itself, depend on sales.

Like other military services, the Coast Guard uses NAFA programs to support and strengthen family and social ties of its military members. Those employees run Coast Guard clubs, recreational facilities, exchanges, grocery stores and child-care centers.

Since these types of operations are not funded through Congress, it is up to Woodall and her 12 employees at the ex-

change to make the profit margin healthy enough to keep things going and still provide quality service.

"We have to earn everything to keep things going," she said. "And the Coast Guard personnel who make up our customers are our best sales force. They let us know what they want to see in the store and we make sure we get it."

Ed Henry's customers have very different needs. He is one of the first called when a natural disaster strikes.

Located on Coast Guard Island in Alameda, Calif., Henry is a regional emergency-transportation representative. He has coordinated transportation needs for recovery efforts of five major disasters that hit the United States in the past year — Hurricanes Omar, Andrew and Iniki; and Typhoons Gay and Brian. He led the Department of Transportation team at the disaster-relief command centers during these relief efforts.

It is a job whose duties take him whichever way heavy winds blow.

"The first disaster I ever worked was in American Samoa," he said. "Getting off the plane in Pago Pago, American Samoa, was a bit of a shock. From there I went to Miami to work Hurricane Andrew. That was a physical and emotional disaster as well as a political one. We supplied the military with all their trucks and buses to move troops and supplies around. After Andrew, I came home for one day and changed clothes,



**Left:** Maxine Lum, a secretary in the 14th District, has received 28 outstanding-performance ratings and 16 special-achievement awards during her 34 years of employment with the federal government.





*Above: Mazline Turner, of the Aircraft Repair and Supply Center in Elizabeth City, N.C., is in charge of overhauling hydraulic components for various aircraft such as helicopters and Guardian jets.*

repacked, and went to Hawaii for Hurricane Iniki. I was gone about eight weeks straight, working disasters."

Theodore Bridis's job involves critical decisions of a different nature.

He is a senior engineer and supervisor in charge of major design problems for 7th District's Civil Engineering Unit Miami.

"My job is to ensure that the maintenance, reconfiguration and rehabilitation of existing structures are executed to fulfill the needs of the Coast Guard," said Bridis.

Be it hangers for aircraft, new bulkheads, or docking facilities for the varied classes of cutters within the Coast Guard's inventory, he ensures that the facilities meet the requirements.

Supervising four civilians and three Coast Guard officers, Bridis and his team have a large area of responsibility, covering Florida up to South Carolina, as well as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

"The Coast Guard is a great place to work because people are naturally motivated," he said. "The Coast Guard does good things and people like to be associated with it."

His positive attitude has paid off not only for the people that work for him but for many who have never met him.

Bridis, who lost both his legs and his right arm in Vietnam combat, has worked extensively with local and state councils to

improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities. As a result of his significant contributions, he is one of five nationwide recipients of the Government Employees Insurance Company's Public Service Award for special achievements and contributions.

His "can-do" attitude transcends all areas of his life. As an avid scubadiver, he's designed a special prosthesis for others to enjoy the sport, and has written about it in a diving book. Living in Florida also allows him to pursue his other hobbies of canoeing, camping, fishing and sailing.

Elaine Martin works as a civil engineer with Bridis. And even though she's only been a member of the Coast Guard for a short time, she's already dealing with the big picture.

Martin writes master plans, looking at future base and facility requirements 10 to 15 years down the road.

"I try to make sure resources are in place when they're needed in the future," she said. "Air stations, new hangers, new berthing areas, new dining areas, boat ramps, medical facilities, housing — I look into the future for very big projects."

After working with the Navy in the ocean engineering office in Washington, she said she enjoys the way the Coast Guard recognizes civilian contributions.

"There's no social segregation between



civilian and military personnel like you may find in the other (military) branches," she said. "I really appreciate that."

Becoming an integral part of the bigger picture is something Gwendolyn Stevens addresses in her psychology classes at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn.

If there is any job that epitomizes civilian contributions in the Coast Guard, it may be that of a professor at the academy.

An energetic and effervescent woman, Stevens speaks openly about the importance of the task with which she has been charged.

"We are all working to produce a Coast Guard ensign," she said. "And it gives us a clearer focus. We can feel that we've had a hand in shaping the organization by helping shape the next generation of leaders. You can't feel much more important and relevant to an organization than that."

At the academy, feeling the significance of one's own impact sometimes comes in unexpected ways. Especially for 28-year teaching veteran Dr. Irving H. King.

Some of his students have gone on to become admirals. Some publish scholarly articles inspired by his former tutelage.

But King, whose own credentials include a doctorate from the University of Maine, three volumes on the history of the Coast Guard and numerous essays and articles tells another story.

"A young officer almost apologetically entered my office one day," he said. "You probably won't remember me. I wasn't a very good student. I loved history but was struggling to survive in

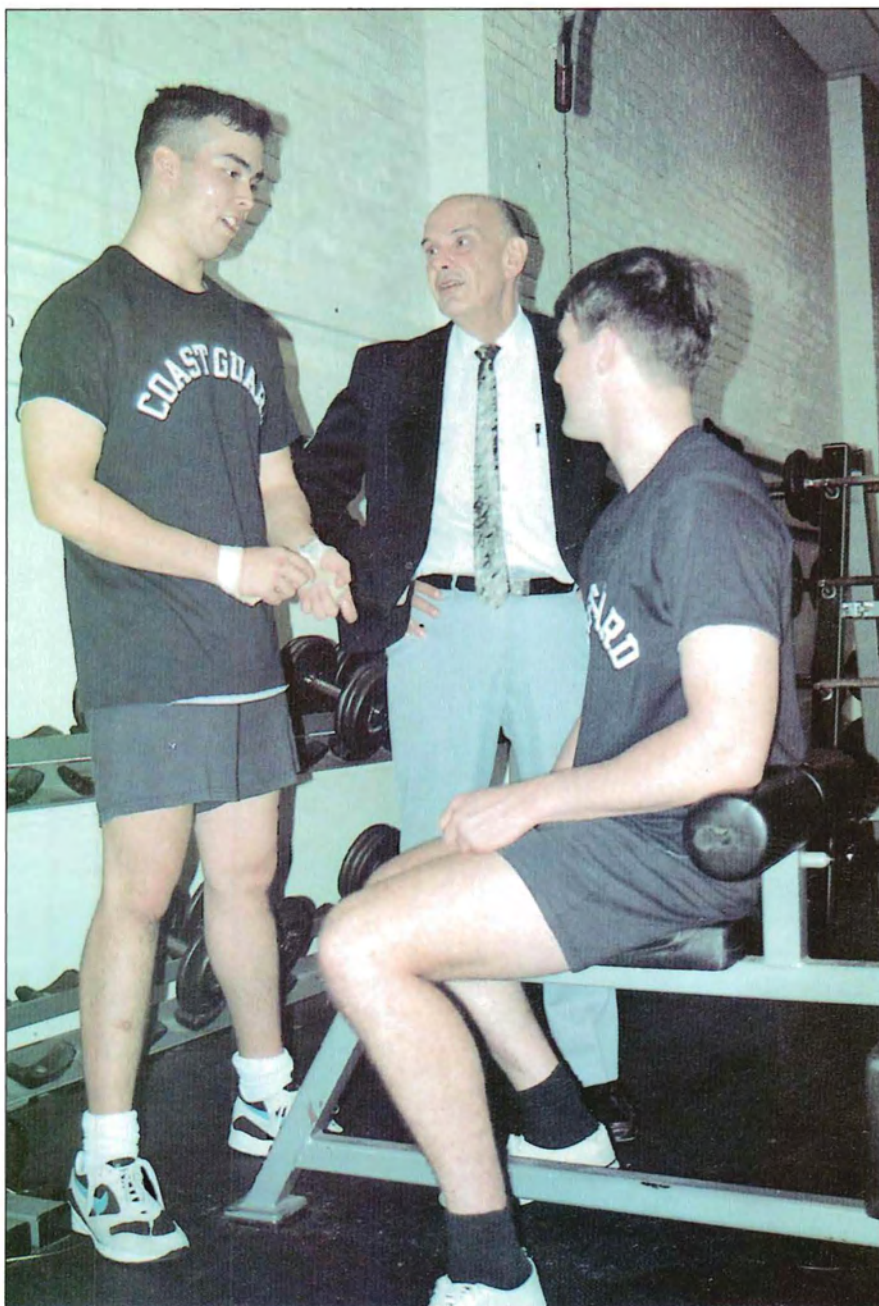
physics and chemistry. The reason I came to see you is that it's important for you to know that you had a very big impact on my life even though I wasn't necessarily a good student for you."

Behind his glasses, King's eyes softened. A smile of contentment brightened his face.

"That is when you feel that you're important," he said.

Civilian members are a vital component of the total force. The support they provide is essential and is a foundation block under the entire Coast Guard structure.

"Our civilians are more than employees — they are members of the Coast Guard," said Tom Fisher, chief of the Civilian Personnel Division.



**Below:** Chuck Mills, athletic director at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn., helps shape the team spirit and health lifestyles of future Coast Guard leaders.



# Civilians throughout history



*During 1906, the crew of Lifesaving Station Coos Bay, Ore., were all civilians. The crewmembers became known as "storm warriors" and "soldiers of the surf."*



# 1789

## BUILDING BLOCKS OF CG CIVILIANS TODAY

**T**he First Congress of the United States was less than four months old when, on Aug. 7, 1789, it appropriated funds for "the necessary support, maintenance and repairs of all lighthouses, beacons, buoys and public piers ... within any bay, inlet, harbor or port of the United States, for rendering the navigation thereof easy and safe."

A few dozen lighthouses and other illuminated beacons, many of them dating from colonial times, then became the federal government's first public works projects. The men and women who kept the lights burning were the first professional ancestors of the modern Coast Guard's civilian employees.

The Coast Guard's genealogy is long and complicated.

The trunk of its family tree is the Revenue Cutter Service, a quasi-military organization founded in 1790. Its original mission was to enforce the customs regulations created by the Treasury Department. The history of the cutter service is the story of how a handful of little ships and their crews evolved into a military institution, always ready to fight alongside the Navy in time of war.

As the nation grew, the federal government created several other institutions in response to the needs of the maritime community. The Life Saving Service, Steamboat Inspection Service and the Lighthouse Service were conceived, administered and operated as civilian agencies.

Late in the 18th century several charitable institutions, most notably the Massachusetts Humane Society, founded in 1786, began setting up the first lifesaving stations on beaches near approaches to major seaports. As merchant ships grew larger and accidents more numerous, however, it became obvious that the country needed a systematic approach to





**Right:** Sumner Increase Kimball became chief of the Revenue Marine in 1871. He then helped appropriate \$200,000 for the hiring of civilian surfmen to operate various lifesaving stations.

the problem of rescuing shipwreck victims.

The federal government entered the shore-based lifesaving business in 1848, when an Act of Congress proposed by Representative W.A. Newall provided \$10,000 for "surf boats, rockets, caronades and other necessary apparatus for the better preservation of life and property from shipwrecks on the coasts of New Jersey."

The job of spending the money was given to CAPT Douglas Ottinger of the Revenue Cutter Service.

The new lifesaving program was supposed to operate like a national volunteer fire department. At each of the designated sites, Ottinger supervised the construction of a shed to house a surfboat, a mortar for shooting lines to wrecked ships, stocks of rope and flares, and a watertight metal "life car" that could be loaded with survivors and hauled along a line from a wreck to the beach. He then picked trustworthy-looking people from the community, handed them a key to the building and a set of printed instructions for using the equipment. The cutter service thereupon officially forgot about the matter.

The system, predictably, deteriorated. The level of interest in the government facilities seemed to vary from town to town; one turned its surfboat into a tub for scalding hogs. A series of devastating storms in 1854 cost several hundred lives, many of which clearly could have been saved had the lifesaving stations been functioning properly.

Congress then took a hesitant step toward professionalizing the system by approving the appointment of a full-time station keeper with an annual salary of \$200. The arrangement was only a slight improvement. If keepers saw a ship run aground, they had to search the local neighborhood for a volunteer crew before rendering assistance.

### LIFE SAVING SERVICE WEAKENS

During the Civil War, the service weakened.

Another series of winter storms in 1870 smashed several ships along the East Coast, with terrible loss of life. Newspapers began demanding that the federal government do something to "check the terrible fatalities off our dangerous coasts."

One year later, the fortunes of the lifesaving system were reversed abruptly when Sumner Increase Kimball was appointed chief of the Revenue Marine.



Kimball was a former attorney from Maine who had worked his way up through the Treasury Department during the Civil War. He talked Congress into appropriating \$200,000 to hire civilian surfmen. They would operate lifesaving stations full-time, at least during the "active season" from November to April. Each station would have a crew of six to eight men. By 1875, new stations dotted the beaches of the East Coast and throughout the Great Lakes.

In 1878, the expanded lifesaving program was placed under a separate civilian agency within the Treasury Department and designated as the Life Saving Service, with Kimball as its general superintendent.

Over the next few years the Life Saving Service's equipment, personnel and morale improved dramatically.

Low but dependable salaries attracted fishermen, oystermen and other skilled seamen. Inspections by Revenue Cutter Service officers ensured that the equipment was always in working order.

One of the most famous lifesaving stations was located at Pea Island, N.C.

On Nov. 30, 1879, a British schooner, apparently escaping the notice of a surfman who was supposed to be on beach patrol, ran aground near the station. Four lives were lost. The assistant inspector of the Life Saving Service, Charles F. Shoemaker, conducted an investigation that resulted in the dismissal of the station keeper and sev-



eral of his surfmen. Shoemaker recommended that a local black seaman, Richard Etheridge, be appointed keeper of the station. Shoemaker assured Kimball that Etheridge "had the reputation of being as good a surfman as there is on the coast, black or white." Kimball then ordered Etheridge to hire a crew of black surfmen.

The Life Saving Service's identity as a civilian institution became a bit blurry when, in 1889, Kimball approved a set of specifications for uniforms. The measure presumably was intended to bolster the service's professional spirit, but the keepers and surfmen were less than enthusiastic when they discovered that they would have to pay for their own uniforms.

During the 1890s, the Life Saving Service began to show signs of wear.

Like other branches of the civil service, it had neither mandatory retirement regulations nor a pension system. Many surfmen and station keepers were men in their 60s and 70s who could not afford to retire. Steam engines and improved navigational aids were reducing the number of shipwrecks, and the service's surfboats and life-cars were becoming obsolete.

On Jan. 28, 1915, President Woodrow Wilson signed a congressional law consolidating the cutter service and the Life Saving

Service. The legislation specified that the 80-year-old Kimball, who had led the service for its entire life and almost half of his own, would retire and his position would be eliminated. The newly consolidated service would be headed by Captain Commandant Ellsworth Price Bertholf, formerly of the Revenue Cutter Service. The government accepted his suggestion that "Coast Guard" is the logical name for the old Revenue Cutter Service as well as the new combination."

The Coast Guard became part of the military forces of the United States, under the Treasury Department in time of peace and part of the Navy in time of war or when directed by the president. Employees of the old Life Saving Service found themselves members of a military organization. Those who were jolted by this development could take comfort from the stipulation that they were now covered by the Revenue Cutter Service's pension plan, that provided for retirement at three-quarters pay after 30 years of service.

## STEAMBOAT INSPECTION SERVICE

Another root of the Coast Guard's family tree germinated with the development of the steam engine. The first steamboats were mechanically inefficient contraptions that endangered the life and limbs of anyone in their vicinity. Nineteenth-century engineers and mariners studied the physics of steam and iron plate by watching boilers explode, usually with spectacular results that made the front pages and obituary columns of newspapers.

In the spring of 1838, three steamboats, the *Moselle*, *Oronoko* and *Pulaski*, blew up and killed about 400 people. On July 7, 1838, Congress passed a law "for the better security of the lives of passengers" aboard steamboats. Such vessels henceforth would be required to undergo periodic hull and boiler inspections, and to carry some new lifesaving and firefighting equipment. The inspections were to be carried out by "skillful and competent persons" appointed "from time-to-time" by federal district court judges.

The 1838 law was a hesitant and clumsy step toward an effective federal system of steamboat-safety regulation. In 1852, in response to a new rash of disasters, including seven boiler explosions and 700 deaths in eight months, Congress acted again with the Steam-

**Left:** Joshua James, keeper of Point Allerton Life Saving Station in Hull, Mass., and his civilian surfmen operating in some of the most dangerous waters on the Atlantic Coast, were responsible for saving 540 lives and more than \$1 million worth of property from 1889 to 1902.







**Above:** Polishing the great lens in the Turkey Point Light on Maryland's Chesapeake Bay was a weekly task for Fanny May Salters — the only civilian lighthouse keeper in the Coast Guard during 1945. She assisted her husband at the light for 23 years and, after his death in 1925, was appointed permanent keeper by President Coolidge.

boat Act of 1852, that became the basis of the Steamboat Inspection Service. A precise set of standards for boiler construction was drawn up, along with a licensing system for engineers and pilots of steamboats that carried passengers. The system was to be administered by civilian inspectors hired by the Department of the Treasury. The first inspectors discharged their duties well, dramatically reducing the frequency of fatal steamboat accidents until the Civil War diverted public and governmental attention from the subject.

In 1871, another congressional act gave the service the responsibility for issuing licenses to masters, pilots, engineers and chief mates. Over the next few decades the steamboat inspectors became increasingly busy men, enforcing an increasingly lengthy list of federal laws that made steamships safer and officers more competent.

In 1903, the inspection service was transferred from the Treasury Department to the Department of Commerce and Labor. A year later the service was rocked by the sinking

of the excursion boat *General Slocum* in the New York harbor area, with the loss of 957 lives. A commission appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt placed most of the blame for the tragedy on the "inadequate" corps of inspectors at New York, several of whom lost their jobs as a result.

By the 1920s, the inspection service was a major presence in the maritime community. One of its licensing certificates hung in the cabin of every captain, deck officer and engineer in the merchant marine. Each steam-powered vessel had to undergo periodic inspections by dedicated professionals who crawled through boilers and bilge compartments, looking for rust and loose rivets, wiggling valves and checking the accuracy of gauges. It was dirty work and the inspectors frequently were unpopular men. They consoled themselves with the thought of the thousands of lives they were saving.

In its first five decades the Lighthouse Establishment operated on a remarkably informal basis. The lighthouses and other navi-



gational aids were built and maintained by private civilian contractors who cast only faint shadows on the history books. The start of a typical Lighthouse Establishment employee's career took the form of a note scribbled by President Thomas Jefferson: "The appointment of William Helms to be keeper of the Lighthouse at Smith's Point is approved. Salary \$250."

By 1852, several hundred lighthouses, buoys, and other aids to navigation were in operation. In that year, Congress decided to formalize the service's administration with the creation of a Lighthouse Board consisting of two army officers, two navy officers and two civilian scientists. Each of the country's 12 lighthouse districts was to be presided over by an official with the title of district inspector.

### FORGOTTEN LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS

The life of the lighthouse keeper became a minor legend — a life that was occasionally heroic, often picturesque and almost always monotonous. Some lighthouses stood in the centers of seafaring communities; others were built on some of the most desolate sites in the country. The notoriously ill-paid keepers frequently suspected that the government had forgotten about them.

"A man had just as well die and be done with the world at once," an assistant keeper on Maryland's Chesapeake Bay wrote in 1909, "as to spend his days here."

The typical keeper lived with his wife and children in a house attached, or adjacent, to the lighthouse itself. Working the lighthouse was a family affair.

A major event in the lighthouse keeper's life was the annual visit of the district inspector.

"When that man came," recalled one keeper's son, "well, he was like probably the 'second coming of the Lord' or something .... He'd come there and, well, we'd all hide or whatever .... But he'd walk in, he'd go right upstairs, through all the rooms, go into the bedrooms."

The inspector might issue a demerit for any transgression from a fingerprint on a lens to a greasy pan left on a stove.

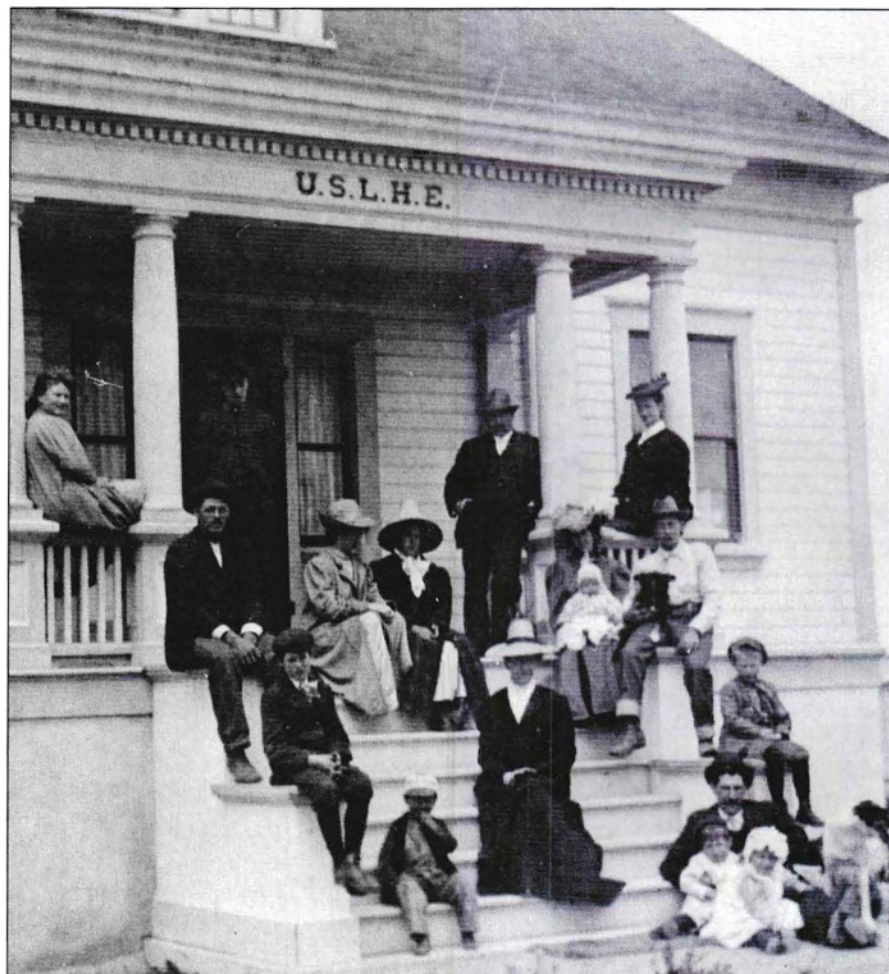
The Lighthouse Board often gave appointments to military veterans. Marcus A. Hanna, who won the Medal of Honor as a sergeant in the 50th Massachusetts Infantry during the Civil War, afterward was appointed keeper of the lighthouse at Cape Elizabeth, N.J. In January 1885, a schooner named the *Australia* went aground near the cape. Hanna rescued two of the shipwrecked sailors and was awarded the Gold Lifesaving Medal, thereby becoming the only person ever to win the United States' two highest awards for heroism.

In a number of cases, elderly keepers became incapacitated on the job and turned their duties over to their wives and daughters. Idawalley Zorada Lewis, who took over



**Left:** A civilian marine inspector with the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation climbs through a ship boiler during the 1930s. The inspectors periodically had to crawl through boilers and bilge compartments, looking for rust, loose rivets and wiggling valves.





**Above:** Lighthouse keepers often took over duties at the lights upon their parents' deaths or relief from service. Family picnics usually kept morale high. This picnic took place in 1908 at the New Dungeness Lighthouse in Juan de Fuca Strait, Wash.

the Lime Rock Lighthouse in Rhode Island when her father suffered a stroke, became a national heroine. In 39 years as a lighthouse keeper, she rescued at least 18 mariners, was awarded several medals and received a visit from President Grant.

As the network of aids to navigation expanded, so did a fleet of utilitarian little ships and boats that serviced it.

Lighthouse tenders, commanded and manned by civilians, did every job from delivering barrels of lamp oil to servicing buoys and clearing snags from rivers. Few lighthouse tenders could be called beautiful, but they and their civilian crews kept the country's harbors, lakes and rivers safe for an ever-expanding merchant marine and recreational-boating community.

## THE MANY MOODS OF A LIGHTSHIP

Further out to sea, another band of stalwart civilians manned the nation's lightships. The first lightship dropped anchor in the mouth of Chesapeake Bay in 1820 and immediately was recognized as an effective aid to navigation. The number of lightships in commission eventually peaked at 56 in 1909.

Life aboard a lightship varied from the in-

sufferably boring in good weather to the terrifyingly dangerous during storms. One 19th-century captain described his vessel as "similar to a barrel," that was "constantly in motion, and when it is in any ways rough, she rolls and labors to such a degree as to heave the glass out of the lanterns, the beds out of the berths, tearing out the chain-plate, etc. and rendering her unsafe and uncomfortable."

The standard contract for a lightship crewman called for eight months of sea duty each year, in four-month hitches, separated by shore leave.

By 1910, the navigational-aids network had outgrown the old Lighthouse Board's ability to manage it. In that year, Congress passed a law making the Lighthouse Service, administered by the Department of Commerce. The first commissioner of the Lighthouse Service, George R. Putnam, presided over it for 25 years.

On July 1, 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a congressional resolution consolidating the Lighthouse Service and the Coast Guard. Merging of the two services saved the government about \$1 million per year, while increasing the personnel of the Coast Guard by nearly 50 percent.

At the time, the Lighthouse Service's members numbered 5,355 — ranging from lighthouse keepers and tender captains to part-time janitors and carpenters. Most were offered the option of enlisting in the Coast Guard or continuing as civilian employees. Former district superintendents and other senior administrators became Coast Guard officers; captains and officers of the tenders were offered appointments as warrant officers.

On November 1, 1941, Roosevelt issued an executive order transferring the Coast Guard from the Department of the Treasury to the Department of the Navy.

The Coast Guard was about to go to war, and to embark on the biggest expansion in its history.

The fact that they were officially working for the Navy Department during the time of war makes the story of civilian Coast Guard employees difficult to trace. Shortly after the Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, invasion, the Navy ordered civilian crewmembers removed from Coast Guard lightships and tenders. About 200 of those men opted to enlist in the Coast Guard. Most of the lightships were taken off their stations as the Navy initiated a program to "dim out" the navigational-aids system. Tenders



were pressed into service as patrol vessels, ice breakers, and convoy escorts.

As of March 1, 1942, the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation was transferred from the Department of Commerce to the Coast Guard. The Steamboat Inspection Service thereby also joined the Coast Guard; the arrangement was made permanent after the war.

Wartime expansion brought about a corresponding growth in the civilian section of the Coast Guard. The secretary of the Navy's annual report for 1942 briefly mentioned "1,024 civilian employees at Coast Guard Headquarters." Many of these were young women, part of a massive influx of typists and clerks who staffed the office buildings that were springing up almost daily in Washington during wartime.

The service's largest wartime employer of civilians was the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, Md. The yard had been established at the beginning of the century as a training facility and a repair depot for revenue cutters. With the absorption of the Lighthouse and Life Saving Services it had taken on the responsibility for constructing lifeboats, buoys, and other navigational aids. The Coast Guard's cutters and large tenders, however, had always been built under contract by civilian shipyards.

At the start of World War II, Navy administrators decided that the Coast Guard could function more efficiently by building some of its own cutters. The Navy added fabricating sheds, railroad tracks, a drydock, and 50 acres at the Coast Guard Yard and construction started on the CGCs *Ironwood*, *Kaw* and *Manitou*. The

yard's civilian workforce then peaked at 3,100 men and women.

Peace brought cutbacks and staff shufflings in the civilian workforce. The yard lost more than one-half of its members — and was legally obligated to hire back several hundred former employees who had been drafted during the war. Responsibilities of civilians then changed from operational to support functions.

By the end of the Second World War the Coast Guard had assumed much of the shape it has today: an institution based on a military organization with a vital civilian-support structure.

Civilians not only filled jobs in support capacities but became a source of technical and administrative expertise as the service's peacetime mission expanded into a broad range of public services. The Coast Guard's organizational structure remained essentially unchanged until 1967, when the service was transferred by Act of Congress from the Treasury Department to the newly-created Department of Transportation.

Today's Coast Guard civilian staff positions include secretaries, contracting, computer specialists, accounting technicians, maintenance mechanics, electricians, paralegal specialists, management/program analysts, accountants and electronic technicians. Most of them work behind the scenes in jobs that are the latest generation in a long line of professionals who, for 200 years, as the famous naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison put it, have been called upon "to do a little of everything — the Coast Guard is used to that."

**Below:** Life for civilian crewmembers aboard lightships varied from insufferably boring in good weather to terrifyingly dangerous during storms. The first lightship dropped anchor in 1820. The number of ships peaked at 56 during 1909.







IDA ZORADA LEWIS  
LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER  
1842-1911